

What is depleted uranium?

DU is uranium-238, a waste product of the nuclear industry. It has a half-life of 4.5 **billion** years.

How is DU used by the weapon industry?

DU is used as armor plate. Alloyed it is added to the shells of bullets and bombs.

Why is DU used in weapons?

Because of its density and physical properties, it is the perfect armor-penetrating weapon. It can destroy tanks, armored personnel carriers, and underground bunkers. It is easily available and it is **cheap**.

Why should we be concerned about the use of depleted uranium?

When DU hits its target, it creates a firestorm of uranium dioxide dust, leaving microscopic fragments that floats through the air. When inhaled, it ravages the lungs, destroys vital organs and the immune system. It is linked to the **Gulf War Syndrome**. It also causes cancer and birth defects.

Has anything been done against the use of depleted uranium?

After the first Gulf War and the war in Kosovo during which DU weapons were used, the United Nations declared the use of depleted uranium a breach of many international conventions. Depleted uranium weaponry has been listed among weapons of "mass destruction or with indiscriminate effect" by the United Nations Human Rights Subcommittee on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities. The effect of DU being in part similar to that of a nuclear weapon, its use is a violation of the Charter of the United Nations and a **crime against humanity**.

Has the U.S. government taken any action against DU?

To this date, it has not. As in the past – when it exposed soldiers to radiation from above ground nuclear testing during the Cold War and Agent Orange during the Vietnam War - the U.S. government has not disclosed the dangers of DU exposure to the troops. It has done a poor job of protecting soldiers from exposure during the first Gulf War, and has kept silent on its dangers in this war. It has also ignored the human and environmental impact of using weapons with DU.

Of the 504, 047 troops who fought in the first Gulf War and have since then left the service, 149,094 (**29%**) are now considered disabled by the VA. Over **9000 have died**. (Statistics from the Department of Veterans Affairs.)

The Bush administration has **cut funding** for veteran's health care and benefit programs by nearly 25 billion over the next ten years.